a little more of the power of decoration by means of colour, I submit that they would not only build more *effectively*, but more *economically*," and I would add, have *more to do*, especially the nameless ones, who might themselves, with their own hands, as well as heads, work at it; for if the poor German can make here a living by painting the houses of the great, why should not an Englishman? He needs only to be taught, or rather put in the way to teach himself.

My interest in the Exhibition of this year has, from the first, been of no ordinary kind, as I hope that it will give a new and more correct direction to public taste. I hope that it will show them when a thing is *good enough* to be dignified with the title of a *work of art*. If it do only this, and nothing more, what a mighty change will it effect.

However the interior of the Exhibition Building may be coloured, it must prove a great lesson, either one way or the other. It will be a thing to be remembered as a guide afterwards, or it will be a thing to be remembered as a failure and a caution. I would suggest that let the colouring be what it may, much additional effect would be obtained if they were to stain *the canvas* proposed for the roof, which would thus, like coloured glass, deepen the tints throughout. C. B. A.

Your paper has contained many clever suggestions for the internal decoration of the great Exhibition Building; but one subject all have failed to consider, and that is economy. I profess to be only an amateur, and therefore shall, with all humility, ask your opinion rather than give my own. I wish to know if the pale grey enamel with which iron can be permanently coated (I believe) at less than one penny per foot, would not have satisfied the requirements both of taste and expenditure? I imagine four coats in oil of expensive colours would cost much more; and if the building remains (as it doubtless will), how many months will pass before acres of corrosion are visible, and a general re-painting of those broad acres be necessary?—W. F.

THE GREAT PAINT QUESTION.

THERE seems to be a general feeling of some link wanting, or some inference not exactly consequent, in the reasoning that has led Mr. Owen Jones to his "yellow rounds, blue hollows, and red flats" for the six-month palace; and from the number of different proposals in its stead, the question seems to be thought worth even more deliberation than the design of the structure itself; while the utility of such questions is shown by the extreme originality and novelty of some of the arguments it has drawn forth. Thus, a letter in the newspapers proposes, "*on the great principle of truth in architecture*," that the ironwork should be made to counterfeit bronze; and the white glass, coloured glass, "after the best examples of York and Cologne Cathedrals." This is such a very novel and useful interpretation of "the principle of truth," that I cannot but think it might be extended to other arts than architecture, with immediate advantage. Observe, this kind of truth consists in the metal being made to resemble a metal, and the glass to resemble glass, but each of a kind far superior to itself. Could not we take the hint, even in what I am now about? Certainly. Let this letter represent a letter, and nothing else: let the signature be a signature, and the date a date; but let the former be spelt "Albert," and the latter "Windsor Castle." I will venture to predict that if you would print it with these simple ornaments (more simple even than the bronze colour and transparent paints), it would have more readers, obtain more notice, and carry more conviction with it than anything that has appeared in your journal this year. In fact, the advantages of adopting this new "principle of truth," in all matters, would be such that its discoverer deserves the gratitude of thousands.

Without pretending to any such originality, I would, as every one seems inclined to do, suggest a method (but a very old one) of solving this momentous brush problem. Leaving the theories of artists, and coming to the experiments of physicists, we find it an established scientific *fact* (not an æsthetic *notion*), that no positive colour can harmonise perfectly with more than *one* other positive colour; nor can it agree, even bearably, with more than one-third of the entire scale of colours, since (if you arrange them in the well-known circle) any two that lie nearer together than one-third of the circumference are positively discordant. The first object, then, we should think, in coloured design, would be so to arrange the tints that no two thus known to be discordant should come together; and it would be easy to show you, had I space, that however little this may be attempted now, yet, "in the elder days of art" (which, by-the-bye, Longfellow should have called the *younger*) this was always done. Now, as it is to be assumed this exhibition will not exclude objects of any particular colours, the building must be so painted as not to be discordant with *any* colour. Chromatic harmony may and should obtain, in the arrangement of the articles exhibited; but, as for the building, if it have any positive colour at all, it must needs be discordant with some of them, the chances are with *two-thirds* of them, since every positive colour is discordant with two-thirds of the whole scale of colours.

It is equally an established physical fact, that the only colours (if so we may call them) which will harmonise, or rather be non-discordant with, all others, are white, black, and all the neutral tints between them. Moreover, these, as well as all the tints or shades of any one definite hue, are harmonious, or rather indifferent to each other.

Accordingly, when we turn to nature's exhibitions, we find, however the articles exhibited may be coloured, their back-grounds are neutral, or comparatively neutral. The purest positive colours belong to the rainbow; the purest neutrality to the clouds that back it. Primary colours are given to the flowers, not to that on which they grow. As we descend or ascend from the house to its inhabitant, from the bearer to the borne, so do we from neutrality to positive colour. The tree is more coloured than the rock or earth whence it springs, the foliage more so than the stems, the blossom or fruit more than all. But where in nature, do you find the bearer more coloured than the borne?—the *exhibitant* than the *exhibited*? Again, nature decks with primary colours, not her leviathans, but her flies. She colours brilliantly only the smallest things; and again, the smallest of each class,—the lizards, the humming-birds, the mullets—not the crocodile, the condor, or the whale.

It seems to me, therefore, that in every view of this colossal cage, whether regarding its size or its destination, any use of positive colour (much more of the primaries) would be contrary to nature,—contrary both to the letter of her laws (as far as physicists have discovered them), and to what may be called the spirit of her practice; if, indeed, it be possible to suppose, as in human law, any clash between the letter and the spirit.

But we want variety. Next to the preservation of the iron, the chief object of the paint is to obviate the monotony and flatness (even amounting to optical deception) which in such a structure, and in such a climate as ours, would be found to attend equally any uniform tint,—for the "sage" or "onion," or "bronze" or "grey," would not make the slightest difference in this respect. Flatness is flatness, whatever be its tint. Now, in *architecture* (that is, in material structures aiming at any beyond material excellences), the avoidance of this æsthetic defect, or this practical inconvenience (for such it would actually here prove), would be a matter of *design*, not of after-addition. It would be one of the points for consideration *from the first*, having its influence on everything else, and influenced by everything else, in the conception of the structure as a work of art,—that is, as a *whole*. But this being no work of architecture, but a piece of *pure engineering* (that is, attempting nothing beyond the supply of material wants), and this not by a studied whole (for it is boasted how few hours' thought it occasioned), but simply by adding and superadding remedy upon remedy, to meet each inconvenience just as it arises or occurs to us (a process which, it is said, has already gone so far as to leave no member as originally "designed")—this being the nature of the thing (not in any sense a work of art, but purely a work of *industry*,—not a design, but a cumulative aggression of remedies), this inconvenience of flatness must, like all others not having been avoided, be now remedied as we best can, by a fresh expedient, *i. e.*, a fresh design. For this the painting affords the only opportunity, and I have shown that we have for the purpose no positive colours, but all the shades of neutral tint from white to black, or (to avoid heaviness and harsh contrasts), let us say from white to a certain shade of grey, approaching perhaps a moderately deep slate. Now, without party-colouring, nature herself would produce *some* variety of this kind, by the lights and shades; which, in an architectural work, might have been so contrived as to suffice by themselves; but here they certainly will not. Well, then, shall we make use of this natural and inevitable party-colouring to aid and reinforce our own, or shall we make it our enemy, partly neutralising our work; or lastly (what is most likely to be done), leave the arrangement to fancy (*i. e.* chance), so that the natural and artificial sources of variety may sometimes help, sometimes counteract, each other? If the first be thought best, it is easily carried out by the merest mechanic, as well as the cleverest artist, by observing the simple rule, to paint darkest what already appears darkest, and *vice versâ*. With about four tints, no gradating would be required, and the arrangement being founded on the effects of evenly-clouded daylight, not sunlight, would be equally true at all hours. Those who have not seen this kind of party-colouring (as any one may easily do on a small model), have no idea of the picturesqueness and *heightening* effect it has, which is, indeed, as though the object were removed into a brighter climate. I would deviate from this rule only in the soffites of the ceiling-girders, making them white, to avoid heaviness.

Of course, we must not hope to escape attempts, by stencilling or some such means, to convert the colouring into ornamental forms or patterns. In the present state of taste in this country, it would be madness to think of convincing the many, that what is originally planned with no view to beauty can receive none from any such additions. Every one here supposes a packing-case, or the wall of a bricklayer's cell, to be "ornamented" by covering it with a printed diaper pattern; and every one, for the present, supposes the "glass palace" to be architecture, and architecture a fine art; though professing to know that what constitutes anything a work of art is the evidence of thought; and knowing that this was planned with the avowed aim of *economising* thought, and that the next thing we were to admire, after the number of miles of sash-bar, was the paucity of hours of study it had cost. It would be waste of words at present to dilate on either of these fallacies—to show either that what is not architecture admits of no ornamentation, or that this structure is not, and never can in any sense be, architecture, and that its only ornaments should be its contents. We must keep this till people are sober.

I have troubled you with these suggestions chiefly on account of having lately had a remarkable proof and warning that no observations, from however humble a source, should be withheld from any possible means of reaching the minds of others. Being bred up (I may almost literally say) in two old cathedrals, I was perfectly aware from a child of that *atrament* (may I not so call it after a hitherto obscure word which it seems to illustrate) on the ancient glass-paintings, which it seems our precious "*restorers*" have mistaken for dust, and knew well that it covered all except the high lights. Could I but have entertained the remotest idea that this was a "secret," or not yet imitated by our artists, so humble an individual might have saved the windows of the Cambridge Chapel from a mutilation that must be a permanent disgrace to this age and its arts. I hope this may be a warning to your friends, as it will certainly be to—

E. L. GARBETT.

HOW VERY CORRECT!—The *Messagere Modanese* states that the Papal Government has determined to order all naked statues in the churches, including the little marble angels, and the Genius at the tomb of Clement, by Canova, to be covered. Paintings are to undergo a similar process.

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